

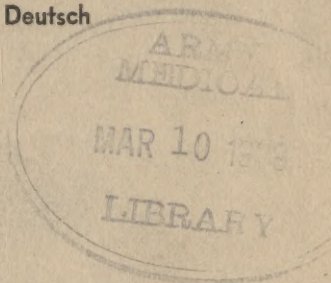
No. 1 in the Series
Social Welfare
Today in New York

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1939

the road upward

Three Hundred Years
of Public Welfare
in New York State

By
David M. Schneider
and Albert Deutsch



[1939]

New York State
Department of Social Welfare
David C. Adie, Commissioner

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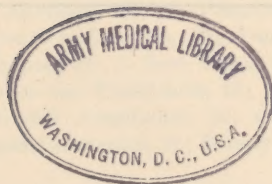


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The Road Upward is the first in a series of publications entitled "SOCIAL WELFARE TODAY IN NEW YORK" to be issued by the New York State Department of Social Welfare as part of its general program of public reporting. Other publications in preparation are: *Provide, Prevent, Restore*, explaining the State's program for public assistance; *Women and Children First*, being a story of the State's services for children; *At Eventide*, discussing the work of assisting the aged; and *Eyes to the Blind*, telling of the work for prevention of blindness and aid to the blind.

Local public welfare agencies, private social service organizations, labor unions, parent-teacher groups, and business and civic associations will find the "SOCIAL WELFARE TODAY IN NEW YORK" series particularly helpful.

The Department will welcome all inquiries about its duties and functions. Special announcements of all forthcoming publications will be sent to citizens of New York and to public and private welfare agencies who request such information by addressing the:

WELFARE PUBLICATIONS EDITOR
Department of Social Welfare
112 State Street, Albany, N. Y.

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FOREWORD

By DAVID C. ADIE

Commissioner, New York State Department of Social Welfare

A WELL-BALANCED approach to the problems of public welfare is hardly possible when the sense of historical continuity is lacking. It is a well-tested truism that he who would push on toward the future must keep an eye on the past. Whether we are conscious of it or not, the past always remains a part of the living present; our conception of the work on hand is always enriched when we recognize that factor.

A great many changes have taken place between the time of the old Dutch *sieckentrooster*, who needed little more than his Bible and a sympathetic smile, and the emergence of the modern social worker, equipped with a bewildering array of professional tools and skills, which still do not exclude the spiritual factor—disguised as the latter may be by the language borrowed from psychology. A long road has been traversed from the simple poor relief expedients of the colonial pioneers to the complex mechanism of public welfare administration in our day. Profound changes in attitudes have also occurred, although culture lag is still very evident in this aspect of our evolution. No longer do we force recipients of public relief to wear the letter “P” on their sleeves as a badge of “pauperism.” We recognize that our job is to help the needy, and not to stigmatize or degrade them. We have learned that many of the problems with which we deal are social in both causation and character, rather than individual. We know that degradation of the individual is a disservice to society, since it renders more remote the potential social usefulness of that individual.

We have freed ourselves from many of the prejudices and shortcomings of the past, but many more still remain with us. Our predecessors have much to teach us; we are inspired by their achievements and sobered by their failures. We can follow those paths they blazed that lead toward progress, we

can try to avoid the pitfalls that lie along the way. A rich tradition has been handed down to our generation, and we should try to rediscover it and to cherish it as a torch lighting the way to further progress.

We are justly proud of the progressive tradition built up in the State Board of Social Welfare since its establishment, by such leaders in social service as John V. L. Pruyn, Theodore W. Dwight, William Pryor Letchworth, Josephine Shaw Lowell, Stephen Smith, Oscar Craig and William Rhinelanders Stewart. The road upward has been a difficult one; but the climb has not been undertaken in vain. We have not yet reached the summit; but we can hope for the future because we base the present upon the lessons of the past.

The Department of Social Welfare takes pride in publishing this contribution to the knowledge of our historical backgrounds. Dr. Schneider and Mr. Deutsch are to be congratulated for the skillful manner in which they have compressed three centuries of evolution into a very readable and highly informative monograph. In broad, sweeping strokes they have sketched the major lines of public welfare development in our State from the first Dutch settlers to our own day. I hope this little book comes into the hands of all public welfare workers in our State. Indeed, no social worker, whether in a private or public agency, can fail to be benefited by a reading of this epitome of public welfare in New York State.

Albany, N. Y.

February 1, 1939

I. WHEN NEW YORK WAS NEW NETHERLAND

They Did Care While there seems to be little factual basis for the traditional description of the old Dutch colonist as a uniformly good-natured, generous soul, it must be said that in the matter of poor relief at least the New Netherland picture compares very favorably with that of later times.

In discussing relief methods under the Dutch it is necessary to keep in mind the sparseness of the colony's population, which remained less than 2,000 up to 1654 and barely reached 10,000 at the time of the surrender in 1664. Though privation and hardship were fairly general throughout the Dutch colony, actual dependency was of infrequent occurrence and never constituted a serious problem.

Following the practice of the mother country, relief administration was preponderantly ecclesiastical in character, being vested in officers of the Dutch Reformed Church; churches of other denominations, however, were expected to take care of their own poor. In localities lacking religious organization, relief functions were placed in the hands of civil authorities—usually the magistrates and two collectors appointed by them.

Collections taken up at the Sunday services were the chief source of relief funds, being supplemented by individual donations and bequests and by the proceeds of court fines. Among fines earmarked in whole or in part for the poor fund, were those imposed for profiteering in unpolished wampum, firing guns on New Year's Day, planting Maypoles, beating drums, and illegal sale of wine, brandy or beer.

The Dutch West India Company, which managed the colony under the limited supervision of the States-General of the Netherlands, apparently gave little heed to the welfare of needy persons. On several occasions it was bitterly attacked by the colonists for its failure to erect welfare institutions—hospitals for the sick, asylums for the aged and for orphan children; these existed in Holland, which at that time had probably the most advanced public welfare organization in

Europe. The Company, in its turn, contended that the erection and support of such institutions were properly the responsibility of the colonists themselves, and charged the latter with being too miserly to carry out their obligations.

The First Social Workers Relief was customarily afforded to the needy in their own homes by the deaconry on a neighborly basis. Soon after the organization of the colonial government, several *siecken-troosters*, or comforters of the sick, were sent to New Netherland. These functionaries, who had minor ecclesiastical standing, were charged with visiting sick persons at their homes and providing them with spiritual counsel and comfort. They may be considered as the first social workers in this area.

Deacons' houses, or almshouses, were established for the dependent aged at New Amsterdam, Rensselaerswyck and other settlements. No stigma seems to have been attached to the occupants of these institutions; the first Lutheran pastor at Rensselaerswyck welcomed the opportunity to live in the poorhouse there in 1657.

The only hospital in the colony was erected in New Amsterdam in 1657, and its services were restricted to sick soldiers and Negroes. The authorities in this settlement maintained a midwife on the public payroll.

First Work Relief The first known instance of work relief in the present United States was instituted at New Amstel (a Dutch colony outside the boundaries of what is now New York State), in the years 1658-59, when that settlement was struck simultaneously by crop failures and a serious epidemic. Many of its six hundred inhabitants were "as poor as worms" and in urgent need of bread. The colonial government met the emergency by undertaking at public expense much work which the settlers would have done of their own volition in more favorable times. Barns and fences were built, the church was enlarged, and a public granary and other buildings were erected, in order to provide employment and income for the distressed inhabitants.

In keeping with Dutch customs, orphanmasters were appointed at New Amsterdam, Beverwyck, and Wildwyck.

The functions of these officials, however, were limited to protecting the interests of propertied widows and orphans; when the latter became destitute, they were turned over to the care of the deacons.

In 1649 the Dutch West India Company recommended that dependent children in Holland be transported to New Netherland, thus lessening the burden of poor relief in the old country and contributing to the sparse colonial population. Wars and marine disasters had left in their wake many orphans, and the poormasters of old Amsterdam eagerly offered their coöperation in this unique experiment in colonization.

The first group of orphans from the charitable institutions of Holland arrived at New Amsterdam in 1654, and were housed in a temporary home, awaiting indenture among the colonists. The children were usually bound out as apprentices and servants for periods ranging from two to four years. At the end of their term of service they might renew their service by mutual agreement with their former masters, or else go free. In the latter event they were allotted about 50 acres of land each, or as much thereof as they could cultivate.

The first common school—the second in the American colonies—was founded at New Amsterdam in 1638, with Adam Roelantsen as schoolmaster. At the close of the Dutch period, nearly every settlement in New Netherland boasted a common school. In some of these the teachers were paid in whole or in part by public funds, and poor children were commonly taught free of charge.

Rebuke and Assist In October, 1661, the first colony-wide poor law in New Netherland was enacted. As stated in its preamble, the purpose of the ordinance was "that the Lazy and the Vagabond may as much as possible be rebuked, and the really Poor the more assisted and cared for." It laid down a uniform rule for establishing and maintaining a poor fund in each locality. The deacons were to have charge of the poor fund in every district having a settled ministry; in others the magistrates were authorized to appoint two collectors "who shall go around every Sunday with a little bag among the congregation and collect the Alms for the support of the Poor of the place."

II. IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

The Duke's Laws After New Netherland became New York in 1664, poor relief in the province was gradually transformed to accord more closely with English customs.

The code known as the Duke's Laws, promulgated in 1665, contained two important features modeled after the famous Elizabethan poor law of 1601: (1) the principle of local responsibility was adopted, each parish being made responsible for its own poor; and (2) relief funds were to be raised out of tax moneys, in contrast to the Dutch dependence on voluntary contributions as the main method of financing poor relief.

The Duke's Laws, however, were effective at first only in the English portion of the province, now comprising roughly the counties of Kings, Queens, Nassau, Richmond, Suffolk and Westchester. An interesting amendment to the code, adopted in 1665, permitted towns in Kings County to form themselves into a "town union" and share the expenses of caring for the insane whenever the burden of such care should become too great for one town alone to bear.

Repression Was the Rule Few general poor laws were enacted during the English colonial period. These were mainly repressive in character, and were concerned with preventing poor persons from gaining settlement rather than with positive aspects of relief. Stringent regulations were imposed against vagrancy.

The first general poor law in the province, enacted in 1683, provided that no newcomer lacking a visible estate or a skilled trade could settle in the province without first posting security against his becoming a public charge. Vagabonds, beggars and others removing from one county to another without being able to put up sufficient security could be returned to their place of residence by the constable.

Governor Dongan in 1685 forbade inhabitants from entertaining or lodging vagabonds, runaway bond-servants or other

persons who could furnish no proof of their respectability. Captains of vessels were required to give the authorities at the place of landing a detailed description of all passengers brought into the province, and were further required to carry back any passenger considered undesirable. Subsequent statutes provided for the posting of surety bonds for immigrants, against the possibility of their falling upon public support.

"Passing On" An act of 1721 required all householders
A Stranger entertaining a stranger for a period of three
days to notify the local authorities of his
"name, quality, condition and circumstances." If, upon
examination, the authorities found the stranger lacking sufficient funds and likely to become a public charge, they were to order the constable to transport the person to the place whence he came last; the outsider was to be "passed on" from constable to constable until he reached the place of legal settlement, or the border of a neighboring colony. Persons harboring strangers for forty days or more were made responsible for their support.

One of the harshest features of early poor law administration was contained in a section of this statute, providing that any person returning to a community whence he had been removed as an undesirable was to be passed on from constable to constable, and that every constable into whose charge he came was authorized to strip him to the waist and whip him on the bare back. A maximum of thirty-one lashes was to be administered to male vagrants, and twenty-five to women. This measure remained on the statute books of New York for nearly a century.

The stringent provincial laws were supplemented by local ordinances that made the lot of the non-settled poor extremely difficult. Until formally admitted as an inhabitant of a town, a newcomer might at any time be warned by the authorities to depart as an "undesirable." This practice of "warning out" was of frequent occurrence.

Poor relief administration was by no means uniform during the provincial period. In rural districts cases of dependency were relatively few, and each case could be dealt with on an

individual basis as it arose. There was little need for a definite relief system in such communities. But in the larger towns, like New York City, a rapidly increasing population and complexity of classes made it increasingly necessary to establish systematic poor relief.

"Pauper" Badge In general, the prevailing attitude toward dependency during the provincial period was stern, cold and strait-laced. Relief was doled out grudgingly, and no efforts were spared to make the "pauper" feel the full stigma of his condition.

A practice adopted in England in 1696, forcing each recipient of relief to wear on his sleeve a brightly-colored badge inscribed with a large letter "P"—signifying pauper—was soon imitated in several New York communities. The practice survived for many years; as late as 1755, an inhabitant of Oyster Bay was chosen at a town meeting to "Inspect into the Poor and to See the Letter P: Sett on their garment as a Token of their Being Supported by ye Town."

Institutions Were Rare Institutional relief was rare in provincial New York. As early as 1692, Governor Fletcher had been instructed by the Crown to take measures for the erection of public workhouses throughout the province for "the employing of Poor and Indigent People." Several decades passed before the order was carried out.

The first public institution for dependents in the province was established in New York City in 1734. It was opened two years later as a three-in-one affair, known under the all-embracing title of "House of Correction, Workhouse and Poor House."

Poorhouses were erected in other parts of the province in subsequent years. In 1747 the local overseers of the poor in Dutchess County were authorized by the Legislature to establish workhouses for able-bodied "paupers"; similar statutes were later enacted for other counties. In each instance the institution was to be built and managed by the town or precinct authorities.

Children During this entire period, the system of appren-
Indentured ticeship and indenture formed the cornerstone
 of child welfare. Dependent children were
bound out singly or in groups, with the invariable specification
that their masters have them taught to read, write and cipher.
The indenture system offered the best means then available
for disposing of dependent and neglected children; but, in
the absence of public supervision, cases of brutal treatment
were frequent.

Since charitable institutions of any kind were rare, homeless
children were often left free to wander about, unless inden-
tured. An interesting example of preventive action in the
case of a neglected child occurred in 1716, when Jonathan
Haight of Rye informed the Westchester Court of Sessions
that "one Thomas Wright, an orphan in that town, hath no
certain Place of Abode there, but lives like a Vagabond and
at a loose end, and will undoubtedly come to Ruine unless this
Court take some speedy and effectual care for ye. prevention
thereof."

Several attempts were made to establish a public school
system, but they came to naught. Schools supported by local
public funds were established by the English towns of East-
chester, Rye and White Plains, but it is uncertain whether free
tuition to the poor was offered in any of these.

The community of Johnstown started a free school in 1769.
A few "charity schools" were opened under the auspices of
the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Foreign Parts
as one phase of its missionary efforts in behalf of the Anglican
Church.

The Crippled With few exceptions, aid to the physically
and Insane handicapped differed no whit from relief
 afforded to other classes of dependents. Ord-
narily, when in need of relief, they were supported in their
own homes, boarded out with private families, or sent to the
poorhouse if one were available.

Treatment of the insane was naturally determined by pre-
vailing attitudes toward the nature and causes of mental ill-
ness. Until well into the eighteenth century there was a
widespread tendency to link insanity with the supernatural,

to regard the insane as witches or as bewitched or possessed persons. Even after this particular superstition was dissipated, the insane were feared and reviled, and public provision for their care was generally characterized by brutality, indifference or neglect.

In dealing with the propertied insane, the dominant concern of the public authorities was to safeguard their property rather than their person; the dependent insane were usually disposed of with a view to protecting society from possible injury at their hands. Violent types were incarcerated in prisons like common criminals; the harmless types were usually treated as common paupers.

Medical attention for the insane was rare, not only for the poor but for the well-to-do, since medical knowledge of mental disease was in a primitive state. There was no established method of treatment, each case being disposed of as it arose.

As early as 1677, the New York City authorities ordered the erection of a special structure for Peter Paull, a "lunatick"; pending its completion, the afflicted person was to "bee confined into prison in the hold." In 1695, the Kings County Court of Sessions ruled that one "Mad James" be maintained by the county, in accordance with the law of 1665 permitting "town unions" to be formed in cases where the care of "distracted Persons" proved too burdensome for one town alone to bear. The deacons of each town in the county were ordered to hold a meeting at once to consider the best means of maintaining the said "Mad James."

A rare instance of medical care is found in the records of Southampton for 1701, when the town trustees ordered a man to send his insane wife to "ye prison house," to be maintained there at public expense. At the same time a Dr. Wade was authorized "to come and see her and to administer that which is proper for such a Person according to his skill and cunning."

The First General Hospital In the absence of hospitals, sick dependents who were sane were usually cared for in their own homes or boarded out with persons willing to nurse them. The larger towns sometimes employed a physician at a fixed salary to visit and treat the

sick poor in their homes. No general hospital existed in the province.

The first institution of this type, now known as The New York Hospital, was established under royal charter in 1771 as The Society of the Hospital in the City of New York in America. It received public funds from both the province and the city of New York; but due to a conflagration, the Revolutionary War and the troublous period that followed, it was not opened until 1791.

III. THE NEW STATE

*The State
Enters the
Relief Field*

During the Revolutionary War, the local poor relief apparatus broke down in many communities. Special problems arose, mainly concerning the relief of refugees from stricken areas, which proved too complex to be handled on a local basis.

As a result, the State for the first time entered the field as a financing and administrative agency in poor relief. State and county commissioners were created to administer emergency relief to persons removed from their places of settlement due to the exigencies of the war. Thus arose the category which came to be known as the "state poor," that is, dependents not properly chargeable to either county or town units, but to the State.

The stringent settlement laws were practically suspended during this period. It was obviously impossible to invoke them against the large numbers of respectable people rendered penniless and forced to flee from their homes because of their fealty to the Revolutionary cause. Several laws also were passed during this period providing special forms of state assistance to disabled veterans and to the families of soldiers killed or wounded in action.

*A Wave
of Reform*

A great wave of humanitarian reform swept over the new nation in the wake of the Revolution. Directly and indirectly it profoundly affected certain aspects of the treatment of dependency and delinquency—but left other aspects untouched. Among the factors in this reform movement, the following may be mentioned: (1) the Revolution cast into the discard many of the old attitudes and institutions, clearing the way for new ones; (2) the humanizing tendencies of the great cultural movement known as the Enlightenment made a deep impress on American thought; (3) there was pressure from the lower classes demanding a share of the fruits of the Revolutionary victory.

In no field of thought, perhaps, was the humanizing trend

more pronounced than in the reform of the penal code. A sweeping revision of the code in 1796 reduced the number of crimes punishable by death in New York State from thirteen to two, and established the first state prison—a progressive step at the time, symbolizing the substitution of imprisonment for capital punishment. Corporal punishment for vagrants was gradually abolished. Formerly, persons convicted of vagrancy were placed in stocks, whipped, branded, or ear-cropped. These penal methods disappeared one after another, and by 1813 none had statutory authorization.

The Rise of Private Philanthropy There was a significant rise of private philanthropic organizations, including societies for the relief of debtors imprisoned for owing small sums, immigrant aid societies, groups offering relief to widows and orphans, and other mutual benefit groups and “friendly societies,” particularly among the laboring groups. Perhaps the most important private welfare agency of this time was the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism in New York City, founded in 1817 by some of the outstanding philanthropists in the country, and anticipating in its work many of the theories and practices embodied in the later charity organization movement.

These progressive movements had little material effect on the general poor law legislation of the period. One beneficial result of the Revolution was the complete secularization of public poor relief, which was placed entirely in the hands of civil officers. Another, written into the first general poor law in 1784, made the office of overseer of the poor elective instead of appointive. Local overseers were empowered to formulate regulations for poor relief, to bind out dependent and neglected children, to set to work able-bodied persons lacking visible means of support, and to determine the annual poor relief budget.

Some Laws More Stringent But in other respects the poor law of 1784 and the more comprehensive one of 1788 were even more repressive in nature than the colonial laws. Requirements for gaining

settlement, thus entitling the individual to public relief, were made more stringent; penalties for violating settlement regulations became more severe, and the removal of non-settled persons deemed undesirable was facilitated.

As in colonial days, the poor laws specifically charged each locality with responsibility for maintaining its own poor. Poor funds continued to be raised through local taxation, and were supplemented by the allotment of court fines levied for such offenses as hawking and peddling, excessive and deceitful gaming, Sabbath-breaking, illegal fishing, profanity and drunkenness.

An important section of the poor law of 1788 authorized overseers of the poor in any city or town to "build, purchase or hire" at public expense, "some convenient dwelling house or houses in such city or town, for the lodging and accommodation of the poor thereof," with the approval of certain local authorities. Towns too small to maintain individual almshouses were permitted to form "town unions" for the purpose of operating an institution jointly. Another act passed in 1788 empowered the county board of supervisors to levy poor rates.

An interesting development during this period was the assumption by the State of responsibility for the support of aged and infirm manumitted slaves who had become state property through forfeiture by attainted persons, and also for the support of certain free-born children of slaves.

Public Health and Child Welfare In the 1790's, New York City was visited by several severe yellow fever epidemics which raised special problems of relief, such as support of the fever stricken, the needy families of those disabled by the disease, and the widows and orphans of its victims. The worst of these epidemics occurred in 1798, when about 2,000 persons in a population of 55,000 died of yellow fever.

A significant outcome of these visitations of contagious and infectious diseases was the rise and development of public health measures, such as systematized quarantine, general sanitation, the establishment of isolation hospitals, and the appointment of public health officers. A municipal board of

health was created in New York City in 1805, mainly as a result of the recurring plagues.

The first child-caring agency in the State, the Ladies' Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children, was established in 1797 in New York City to help surviving dependents of fever victims. Similar organizations were founded in succeeding years in Albany (1804) and other up-state cities.

A notable development in the field of child welfare was the rise of the free public school movement. The first orphan asylum in the State was founded in 1806 under the auspices of the Orphan Asylum Society in the City of New York, an offshoot of the Ladies' Society established in 1797. Beginning with 1811, the Society received lump-sum annual grants from the state treasury, a practice that was continued for many years in relation to other privately-managed orphan asylums.

The growth of special child-caring institutions proceeded very slowly. Dependent children in increasing numbers were placed in the local almshouses, where they were herded indiscriminately with all other classes of dependents.

*Progress in
Caring for
the Insane*

As has been indicated, the only institutions open to the insane in colonial times were the poorhouses and jails. Significantly, the first legislative measure containing a provision for the mentally ill, enacted in 1788, was entitled "An Act for apprehending and punishing disorderly persons." A section of this law empowered any two justices of the peace to direct local constables and overseers of the poor to apprehend "furiously mad" and "dangerous" persons afflicted with lunacy, to lock them up in some secure place, and to chain them there if necessary.

In September, 1792, the first mental patient was admitted into the newly-opened New York Hospital. But even here the treatment was custodial rather than curative in nature, the mental patients occupying "cells" in the basement of the institution. Overcrowding soon set in, and additional accommodations were made from time to time, but these could not meet the rapidly increasing number of applications.

Finally the hospital authorities decided to build a separate building for the mentally ill. In response to a petition for aid, the State Legislature in 1807 voted an annual grant of \$12,500 for fifty years toward the erection and maintenance of the new building. It was opened in 1808.

The following year a law was passed authorizing the overseers of the poor in any city or town within the State to enter into contract with the New York Hospital for the maintenance and care of insane paupers belonging to their respective localities, expenses to be paid out of the local poor funds. This was the earliest statute to recognize the insane poor as a distinct group.

Unfortunately, this arrangement did little to alleviate the condition of the insane in the State, due to two principal reasons: the capacity of the new "lunatic asylum" was limited to a few score patients, with private patients being preferred to "charity" cases; and many poor law officials were loath to send their charges to the asylum, since it was much cheaper to keep them in local poorhouses and prisons than to pay the expense of transportation and maintenance at the institution in New York City.

More Milestones The opening in 1821 of the Bloomingdale Asylum as a separate unit of the New York Hospital marked an historic milestone in the treatment of the mentally ill, this being the first institution of its kind in the State operated primarily on therapeutic principles. Founded through the initiative of Thomas Eddy, a Quaker philanthropist, it was modeled closely on the lines of the humane "moral treatment" introduced at the Retreat at York, England, toward the end of the eighteenth century. But largely because of the two aforementioned reasons, the plight of the insane poor on the whole was but little ameliorated through this development.

Meanwhile, the first free dispensary had been founded in 1790, as The New York Dispensary, with Isaac Roosevelt as its president.

The New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb—the second of its kind in the United States—was

incorporated in April, 1817, and began receiving state grants in aid two years later.

Another institution for the deaf was established at Canajoharie, Montgomery County, in 1823, but this proved a short-lived experiment, terminating its existence in 1836.

New York City was hard hit by a series of economic depressions during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The one resulting from Jefferson's Embargo Act of 1807, prohibiting all commerce between American ports and Europe, lasted for two years and was by far the most serious. It was featured by demonstrations of unemployed sailors and laborers, the establishment of work relief projects, and a public works program enlisting the coöperation of the federal government.

IV. NEW TIMES—NEW TRENDS

The Empire State Great changes in the socio-economic pattern of the United States occurred during the half century from 1824 to 1866, marking the transition from an agricultural to an expanding industrial economy. New York State emerged as the Empire State, the most powerful state, economically, in the Union. Vast networks of transportation reaching out in all directions brought the communities closer together, and made New York a focal point for the commerce and industry of the nation. The population of the State, fed by swelling streams of immigration, grew rapidly. Totalling little more than 1,600,000 in 1825, the population almost tripled in the following four decades.

To some sections of the people the economic transformation brought comfort and prosperity, to others extreme poverty and dependency. The negative aspects of the changes were reflected in depression periods of increasing severity and longer duration, and in the evils attendant upon rapid, unplanned urbanization—poor housing, overcrowding, unwholesome factory conditions, unemployment.

The Yates Survey The period opened with the publication of the first state-wide poor law survey, conducted under legislative authority by Secretary of State J. V. N. Yates. The report of 1824 constitutes one of the most valuable historical documents on public welfare in this country. It presented a sweeping view of contemporary poor relief administration; gave a statement of current theories of poverty and dependency; and made recommendations that served as a basis for the public welfare set-up in this State for many years.

The Yates survey revealed a wide variation in poor relief methods as practiced in different parts of the State. In general, these methods may be divided into four main categories: (1) almshouse relief; (2) home relief; (3) the "contract system," whereby all the poor of a locality were placed

under the care of one or more householders at a fixed rate per year, month or week; and (4) the "auction system," whereby the town's poor were "auctioned off" to the person or persons offering to maintain them for a stated period at the lowest cost to the community.

On the basis of returns from 367 New York cities and towns, Secretary Yates reported a total number of 22,111 recipients of public poor relief, of whom about three-sevenths were in New York City. About one-tenth of the dependents were maintained in the thirty almshouses scattered throughout the State. Most of these institutions were operated by individual cities and towns, a few were maintained by several towns jointly under the town-union plan, and Rensselaer County boasted a county poorhouse which had been established in 1820.

Auctions and "Dumping"

The practice of auctioning off the poor to the lowest bidder was widespread. It was believed by proponents of this system to be the most economical way of disposing of the poor, and that the humiliation and fear involved in standing for "sale" at a public auction deterred many persons from applying for relief.

That the auction system led to scandalous abuses is well authenticated by contemporary records. It appears that liquor was sometimes passed around at "pauper auctions" as a means of stimulating low bids. In many cases the successful bidders were themselves on the fringe of dependency, bidding extremely low in a desperate effort to avoid applying for relief themselves. Bids were usually made on the basis of the potential labor power of the paupers on the auction block, since the latter were expected to do work for their masters according to their abilities.

The legal aspects of settlement and removal had become so complicated by this time as to result in an enormous amount of costly litigation. Reports to Secretary Yates showed that expenses arising out of questions of legal settlement amounted to nearly one-ninth of the total poor relief cost in the State. In Oswego County settlement and removal proceedings had cost more than the entire burden of supporting the poor.

Some towns resorted to disgraceful and fraudulent practices to rid themselves of dependents. At times, indigents, particularly mentally handicapped persons unable to give a coherent account of themselves, were carried surreptitiously from one town to another, and left stranded there. This practice of "dumping" paupers apparently was quite common.

In summing up the major defects in prevailing poor law practices, Yates emphasized the following points: (1) cruelty and extravagant expense resulting from the chaotic, confusing laws of settlement and removal; (2) "barbarity and neglect" involved in the practice of bidding off the poor at public auction; (3) inadequate care and treatment of dependent children; (4) failure to provide work for able-bodied dependents; (5) the tendency of existing poor laws to encourage vagrancy and beggary; (6) ill-treatment of the insane and feeble-minded, largely through the lack of suitable asylums for their special care; (7) lack of economy in the disbursement of relief.

County Poorhouse To remedy these evils, Yates presented a ten-point plan including as its chief recommendation the establishment of a statewide system of county poorhouses, where all paupers were to be maintained at county expense, the able-bodied to be set at suitable work and the children to be given an adequate education. These county institutions were to supersede the locally-managed poorhouses.

The complicated system of settlement and removal was to be simplified, one year's residence in a county being deemed sufficient to gain a settlement (with a few minor exceptions). Outdoor relief was to be abolished, or at least minimized.

Yates enthusiastically favored the county almshouse system, declaring that it would cut relief costs at least 50 per cent, and his optimism was shared by most local poor law officials who answered his questionnaire.

When Yates submitted his historic report to the Legislature in 1824, he appended to it a model bill embodying his major recommendations. This bill, with some important amendments, was enacted as Chapter 331 of the Laws of 1824: "An Act to provide for the establishment of county

poorhouses." While based on the broad principles advocated by Yates, it contained so many exceptions to his chief proposal for the mandatory establishment of county poorhouses as nearly to nullify it in practice.

The statute made it the duty of the supervisors of "each" county—with thirty-eight out of fifty-four counties excepted—to provide at once for the erection of one or more county poorhouses to which all properly certified applicants for relief were thenceforth to be removed, unless sickness or infirmity rendered such removal dangerous. Supervisors of the exempted counties were authorized to build almshouses whenever they should vote to do so. All expenses for building and maintaining the institution and supporting its inmates were to be defrayed by the county out of tax funds.

A new body of relief officials was created, county superintendents of the poor, whose principal function consisted in managing the almshouse. Each county was to be charged with the support of all dependents within its borders; removal of any indigent person from one county to another was prohibited, no matter what the settlement status of such person might be.

Breaking with Tradition The act of 1824 marked a sharp transformation in the poor law policy of the State, representing a profound though not complete break with the tradition of narrow local responsibility handed down from the Elizabethan age. It is astonishing how closely the principles espoused by Yates in 1824 anticipated the famous English poor law reform of ten years later.

By 1835, all but four of the existing fifty-four counties had poorhouses, while county responsibility for all the poor was observed in forty of them. It appeared that the county system was now established as a permanent principle in New York's poor law administration.

Before long, however, the new system began to break down before a rising tide of opposition. The drastic economies that had been fondly anticipated failed to materialize; friction developed between county and town officials over poor relief authority; periodic investigations revealed terrible conditions

in existing county almshouses—all of which tended to bring about disillusionment with the new system.

Petitions began to pour into the Legislature from counties requesting authorization to return to the old system of town responsibility. Twenty-one counties were permitted to restore the distinction between town poor and county poor in the five-year period beginning with 1843.

Finally, in 1849, a law was enacted allowing the supervisors in any county to abolish or restore, at their own discretion, the town or county system of relief. This act heralded the official return to the old principle of local responsibility, which has continued in effect to the present day. However, the county poorhouse remained the center of the poor relief system throughout the period under discussion, receiving all types of public dependents, sane and insane, young and old, the able-bodied, the lame, the halt and the blind.

Special Institutions Inevitably this indiscriminate herding resulted in abuses so shocking as to lead to constant pressure for proper classification and segregation of the different groups of dependents. As a response to this demand, and also because of the rapid increase of the dependent classes coincident with a rise in the general population and the shifting economic complexion of the State, special institutions for dependent and delinquent groups were gradually established.

This was manifest particularly in the field of child welfare. In 1824, the House of Refuge for Juvenile Delinquents in New York City was established, the first juvenile reformatory in America. Until that time, child offenders were customarily placed in the same prisons and often in the same cells as adults, with the result that they soon received a thorough preparation for a criminal career.

For some years, the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism had conducted periodic inquiries into the causes of dependency. Concluding that juvenile delinquency was a major factor, it turned its attention to that particular problem, changed its name to the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents and founded the House of Refuge as

the means of realizing its new aims. From the start, this institution was supported mainly by state funds, which it continued to receive until its dissolution in 1935.

*Guidance
for Juveniles*

Juvenile offenders from every part of the State were admitted to the House of Refuge until pressure from up-state communities for a more accessible institution resulted in the building of the Western House of Refuge in 1846. This was the first American juvenile reformatory established under complete state financial and administrative control. Opened at Rochester in 1849, it is now located at Industry and is known as the State Agricultural and Industrial School; it is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Welfare.

The existence of large numbers of homeless and neglected children in New York City led to the establishment of two important organizations. The New York Juvenile Asylum (now Children's Village, at Dobbs Ferry) was founded in 1851, as a place where such children might receive "moral, intellectual and industrial" training and, whenever possible, be bound out at suitable employment.

In 1853, Charles Loring Brace founded the Children's Aid Society, with the aim of rescuing homeless and neglected children from the slums of New York City and placing them out in rural districts, where they might develop amid wholesome surroundings. This marked the beginning of the organized placing-out movement in the United States. In subsequent years similar societies were established in other parts of the State.

Dissatisfaction on the part of Catholics with the predominantly Protestant character of the early child-placing movement led to a counter-movement, exemplified in the founding of the Catholic Protectory in 1863, under the auspices of the Society for the Protection of Roman Catholic Children in New York City. Another Catholic Protectory was founded in Buffalo the following year.

The Thomas Asylum for Orphan and Destitute Indian Children was organized at the Cattaraugus Indian reservation in 1855. Named after Philip E. Thomas, a retired railroad pioneer active in educational work among the Indians,

and started under private auspices, this institution passed into complete state control in 1875 and is now known as the Thomas Indian School. This institution also is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Welfare.

Private Orphanages The trend toward institutionalization of dependent children continued unchecked, with a steady increase in the number of privately-managed orphanages in this State. While in 1825 there were only two such institutions, by 1866 they totalled more than sixty. Many of these asylums were built during the Civil War period to accommodate children orphaned by the huge death toll in the Union Army. Until 1874 the State annually appropriated tens of thousands of dollars for general distribution among these private asylums, besides making special grants in aid of particular societies.

Institutions for neglected and truant children also were organized in various cities. The State contributed to the building and maintenance of many of these child-caring agencies through general annual appropriations distributed by the several counties on a per capita basis, and through direct lump-sum grants. In spite of the steady growth of these special institutions, however, the number of children in almshouses continued to increase, totalling more than 26,000 by 1866.

Immigrant Problem Mass immigration brought in its wake grave problems of public health and poor relief. A widespread hostility toward foreigners found political expression in the Native American movement, which arose in the 1830's. It gained much strength in the 1850's, following the great Irish and German influxes of the decade 1845-54, when, largely as a result of the potato blights in Ireland and the unsuccessful revolt of 1848 in Germany, nearly 3,000,000 Irish and German immigrants landed in America.

Most of them entered through the port of New York and made this State their home. Large numbers were poverty-stricken, and became dependent upon arrival or soon thereafter. Others were stricken by disease on the long, grueling

voyage in steerage, and required public care and support upon landing. Still others were stripped of their meager possessions by the various types of swindlers and thieves who preyed upon the bewildered, helpless immigrants.

Alarmed poor law officials made urgent demand for state and federal legislation that would remove from the local communities the mounting burden of public support to destitute and sick immigrants. Finally, in 1847, the New York Legislature created a Board of Commissioners of Emigration, charged with the responsibility of reimbursing local communities in the State for relief granted to certain categories of foreigners.

The extent of financial participation of the Commissioners of Emigration in the care and support of immigrants is indicated by the fact that, during the years 1847-60, total reimbursements of \$658,280 were made to poor law authorities in the several up-state counties and cities, and \$97,000 was reimbursed to New York City authorities, while nearly \$100,000 was paid to various orphanages, hospitals and other charitable institutions under private operation.

The Alien In effect, the State undertook the financial
A State Charge responsibility for the support of all aliens
 within its borders who became public
charges within a certain number of years after arrival. Funds
for this purpose came out of head taxes and indemnity bonds
imposed on immigrants and crews of vessels arriving at the
port of New York.

The Commissioners of Emigration were also given control of the Marine Hospital at Quarantine and of other buildings designed for the care of needy immigrants. This board may be considered the first permanent state body vested with administrative power in the field of poor relief.

The state head tax on immigrants was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in 1849. A commutation fee was immediately imposed as a substitute, serving as a source of funds for the Commissioners of Emigration until 1875, when it, too, was declared unconstitutional. Shipmasters were required to post a \$500 bond against certain classes of passengers becoming public charges within a period

which was at first set at ten years after arrival, and later reduced to five years. The classes for whom indemnity bonds were required included mentally and physically handicapped persons and husbandless women with children.

As a means of protecting immigrants more effectively against unscrupulous boarding-house keepers, runners, transportation agents and other swindlers, a central land depot for all immigrants arriving at the port of New York was established in 1855 at Castle Garden, a remodeled fort located at the foot of Manhattan Island. Here the immigrants were given advice by the Commissioners or their agents on matters of lodging, employment, transportation and safety of luggage; here they were also afforded material aid when necessary.

The Board of Commissioners of Emigration functioned until 1891, when it was superseded by federal immigration authorities under a congressional act of that year. In 1892, Ellis Island was opened as the central immigrant depot under federal supervision.

Epidemics and Depressions A series of emergency periods created special relief problems. The cholera epidemic of 1832 resulted in the establishment of temporary health boards in many towns, vested with certain poor relief responsibilities; local overseers of the poor served on each board. In Buffalo and other towns, permanent health boards were established as a consequence of this plague. Sickness and death of thousands of breadwinners resulted in marked increases in the relief rolls. Important sanitary improvements, such as the building of the Croton Aqueduct to ensure pure water for New York City, developed out of the experiences of the epidemics of 1832 and subsequent years.

The State experienced several economic depressions during the period, notably those of 1837-43, 1854-55 and 1857-58, but these had few permanent effects on the public welfare machinery.

Dissatisfaction with the methods of distributing public outdoor relief in New York City during the depression of 1837 was a major factor in the founding of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in 1843.

The aim of the new society was to dispense relief on a personal basis, with emphasis on moral, rather than material, aid.

Horace Greeley and others raised the slogan "Go West!" in connection with the crisis of 1837, urging the unemployed to move with their families into the interior, where greater opportunities awaited them.

The depression of 1854-55 witnessed a strong upsurge of agitation among the unemployed in New York City, who unsuccessfully demanded the setting up of public works projects to relieve unemployment. An even greater exhibition of class-consciousness attended the crisis of 1857-58. Pressure groups of the jobless raised militant slogans and demands, among which were the "right to work" and the "right to relief." Demonstrations and parades of unemployed workers, sometimes reaching huge proportions, became almost daily occurrences, and some public authorities were in constant fear of riots and even of revolution. There is no doubt that the militant character of the workers' demands was a decisive factor in gaining whatever favorable consideration they received.

*Relief during
the Civil War*

Millions of dollars were spent by counties, cities and towns in the State for the relief of indigent families of soldiers during the

Civil War. Methods of dispensing such aid varied, sometimes being handled by private or semi-private agencies, at other times by public authorities. Beginning with 1862, the State Legislature appropriated several hundred thousands of dollars for transportation and care of sick and wounded discharged soldiers to and from their homes. The governor was authorized to appoint agents for this purpose, and agencies were established in various key points throughout the State. Many laws were passed enabling localities to raise funds for the relief of sick, destitute and disabled soldiers.

Efforts during and immediately after the war to establish a home for destitute and disabled veterans met with little or no success. Finally, the Soldiers' Home was founded under private auspices and located at Bath. In 1878, it was transferred to state control and renamed the New York State Soldiers and Sailors' Home. In 1929, it was brought under

federal control; it is now operated by the United States Veterans Administration.

The State Takes Hold A distinctive feature of this period in public welfare history was the rise of state institutions for the mentally and physically handicapped. The State Lunatic Asylum at Utica, established in 1836 and opened in 1843, was the first state hospital in New York; indeed it was the first charitable institution of any kind under state ownership, operation and control. The cost of supporting indigent patients at this hospital, however, was charged to the counties whence they came.

The founders of the Utica Asylum hoped that it would make possible the removal of all the mentally ill from county poorhouses, but this hope proved illusory; the institution could accommodate only a small proportion of even the curable cases. Although it soon became apparent that additional hospital facilities were needed for the indigent insane, and public agitation toward that end was strong and continuous, more than a score of years passed before another state hospital was established.

Meanwhile the more populous districts built county asylums for the insane, usually consisting merely of a separate structure on the poorfarm, maintained as an integral part of the poorhouse system. But in a few instances they were operated as distinct institutions.

New Policies The New York City Lunatic Asylum at Blackwell's Island (now the Manhattan State Hospital), founded in 1834, was the first municipal mental hospital in this country. The Willard State Asylum for the Chronic Insane at Ovid was established in 1865, marking the inauguration of a new policy in the state care of the mentally ill, whereby acute and chronic cases were maintained in separate institutions. This policy was to remain in force in New York State for a quarter-century. A third institution, the Hudson River State Hospital, was established in 1866 and opened five years later.

When the experiments of Edward Seguin and other European pioneers proved that the higher grades of feeble-minded

children were teachable, and that many of them could be trained to make a satisfactory adjustment in normal society, a demand arose for suitable educational institutions for this group. As a result of this agitation, together with the general trend toward removing various dependent groups from almshouses to special institutions, The Asylum for Idiots (now the Syracuse State School) was established in 1851 as the first of its kind to be opened under state ownership and control.

The New York Institution for the Blind, founded in 1831 under private auspices, was the first American school for the blind to go into operation, and began to receive state support soon after its opening in 1832. It is now known as the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind. In 1865, the State School for the Blind was established at Batavia. The rise of these state-owned and state-aided institutions for the mentally and physically handicapped accentuated the need for centralized state supervision.

V. THE STATE BOARD OF CHARITIES

*Strictly
Advisory*

The first state supervisory body owed its origin mainly to considerations of economy, together with a desire to end shocking abuses in unsupervised institutions, as revealed in recurrent reports. The State Legislature over a period of years had been appropriating progressively larger sums in aid of an ever-increasing number of public and private charitable institutions. Grants were apportioned on the basis of whatever data were supplied by the institutions themselves. No governmental agency existed to examine the validity of claims.

It was difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether the needs of institutions were as represented, or that state grants were always prudently expended. Sporadic investigations showed that some institutions receiving state funds were ill-managed and unworthy. A sharp rise in the number of institutions—especially child-caring agencies—during and immediately after the Civil War, gave impetus to the growing demand for a central supervisory body.

In 1867, the Legislature enacted Chapter 951, setting up a Board of State Commissioners of Public Charities, consisting of eight members appointed by the governor and serving rotating terms of eight years. They were authorized to visit and inspect at least once a year all charitable and correctional institutions, excepting prisons, receiving aid from the State, and to inquire into their financial condition and management.

All public almshouses were to be visited and inspected at least once every two years by the commissioners, who were to render a report on their findings to the Legislature. They were also empowered to administer oaths to witnesses and to compel their attendance when necessary. But the Board had no power of administration or control; its duties were strictly inspectional and advisory.

*A Progressive
Influence*

While its primary purpose at first was to guide the Legislature in making appropriations to institutions, the Board began to wield a decided influence on welfare developments through its strategic position for shaping public opinion. Its recommendations in the early years were definitely on the side of progress.

In 1873, its name was changed to The State Board of Charities, and its power was extended to the visitation of all charitable, eleemosynary, correctional and reformatory institutions, excepting prisons, whether receiving state aid or maintained by municipalities or otherwise. By the terms of the same act the membership of the Board was enlarged to eleven, with four state officials—the Lieutenant-Governor, the Secretary of State, the Comptroller and the Attorney-General—serving ex-officio. No institution for the mentally ill was thereafter to be established or maintained without receiving a license from the Board.

The law of 1873 also created a salaried State Commissioner in Lunacy, responsible to the Board, and an ex-officio member thereof. In 1889, a Lunacy Commission of three members was created to supervise institutions for the mentally handicapped, acting independently of the State Board of Charities. An amendment to the State Constitution adopted in 1874, and effective January 1, 1875, prohibited the extension of state financial aid to private agencies, excepting those caring for the blind, deaf-mutes, and juvenile delinquents.

*"State Poor"
and Aliens*

A new and permanent category known as "state poor" had now grown up. These were dependent persons having no legal settlement in any county within the State. The Legislature in 1873 authorized the State Board of Charities to contract with not more than fifteen counties and cities for the reception in their almshouses of the "state poor," to be maintained therein at state expense. It devolved first upon the secretary of the Board, later upon a special bureau of "state and alien poor" to return such persons to their homes, or

to friends in other states or countries, or to provide for their maintenance within the State.

Dependent Indians also were considered state wards. An act of 1894 (Chapter 436) provided that every "pauper" Indian, i.e., one "who is blind, lame, old, impotent or decrepit or in any other way disabled or enfeebled so that he cannot maintain himself," was to be maintained in a county poorhouse at state expense.

Throughout this period there was a marked agitation against "alien pauperism," a phrase that was much abused, incidentally, by contemporary alarmists. This pressure led to various state and federal laws restricting the entrance of convict, pauper, and other undesirable immigrants. It culminated in a congressional act of 1882, regulating immigration and containing a provision that "any convict, lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge" should not be permitted to land on these shores as an immigrant. At first this provision was executed by state authorities; later it was placed in the hands of federal immigration officials.

*Two Groups
Taken Out
of Almshouses* While the almshouse remained the center of the public relief system during this period, two important groups of dependents were removed from its orbit by legislative measures. The first measure was an act of 1875 which prohibited the admission or retention in public almshouses of healthy children over three years of age (later reduced to two years). In this memorable movement, the State Board of Charities—and particularly its president, William Pryor Letchworth—played an important part, using reports as effective instruments for mobilizing public protest against the demoralizing association of children with adult paupers in poorhouses.

The second great step was the historic act of 1890, providing for state care of all the mentally ill in state hospitals and prohibiting their retention in almshouses.* Through

*The counties of New York, Kings and Monroe were exempted from the provisions of the original act but, by 1895, they were all brought within its scope.

this act, the principle was established that all the insane are entitled to state care.

A New Trend Institutionalization of the dependent classes was still the dominant ideal during this period. The trend, however, was now away from the catch-all almshouse toward special institutions, a number of which were operated by the State. Due largely to the efforts of Josephine Shaw Lowell, a member of the State Board of Charities, an institution was established in 1878 for the "enforced custody and protection, during the child-bearing age, of feeble-minded young women of proper physical development to become mothers."

Operating at first as a branch of The Asylum for Idiots at Syracuse, this institution was incorporated separately in 1885 as the State Custodial Asylum for Feeble-Minded Women at Newark. This was the first custodial (as opposed to educational) institution for the feeble-minded in America, and it also marked the first attempt to protect society against the reproduction of its defective members through their segregation.

In 1893, a third type of institution for the feeble-minded—for lower grade defectives considered to be unteachable—was established at Rome, on the site of the former Oneida County Almshouse. Founded as the Oneida State Custodial Asylum, it is now known as the Rome State School.

The tendency toward diversification of institutions for the mentally handicapped was further reflected in an act of 1892 providing for a separate state colony for epileptics, a group which had hitherto been maintained in poorhouses, hospitals for the insane and institutions for the feeble-minded. This development was largely attributable to the propaganda work of Dr. Frederick Peterson and William P. Letchworth. The new institution was built on the site of a former Shaker colony at Sonyea, and was called Craig Colony in honor of Oscar Craig, the late president of the State Board of Charities.

Aid to Veterans We have already alluded to the organization of the Soldiers and Sailors' Home at Bath in 1876. In 1894, the New York State Woman's Relief Corps Home was established at Oxford, for the reception of veterans and their wives, widows and mothers of veterans, and army nurses.

*Reform—
not Punishment* Another important development was the extension of the reformatory idea to the treatment of adult offenders. The first concrete application of this progressive principle to other than juveniles was the founding in 1870 of the New York State Reformatory at Elmira, admitting first offenders convicted of a felony, between the ages of sixteen and thirty.

The indeterminate sentence was introduced at Elmira for the first time in this country, as an integral part of the whole concept of reformation. Josephine Shaw Lowell played a leading role in the creation, in 1881, of a reformatory at Hudson for female misdemeanants between fifteen and thirty years of age, mainly those convicted of sex offenses. A second institution of this type, the Western House of Refuge for Women at Albion (now the Albion State Training School), was founded in 1890, and a third, the New York State Reformatory for Women at Bedford (now the Westfield State Farm), in 1892.

In 1904 the Hudson reformatory was transformed to the New York State Training School for Girls by a new organic act lowering the minimum and maximum age limits for admission.

Influence of the "S.C.A.A." An important influence on public welfare development was exercised by the State Charities Aid Association of New York, a private agency organized in 1872 by Louisa Lee Schuyler. Its major object was to bring about reforms in the administration of public institutions, acting in coöperation with local welfare officials and with the State Board of Charities. The society operated largely through the organized efforts of volunteer visitors.

An act of 1881 authorized the State Charities Aid Association to appoint representatives to visit, inspect and examine public charitable institutions throughout the State, and to report annually to the State Board of Charities.

This agency did much to improve conditions in individual institutions. Through its skillfully executed educational programs it became a major force in shaping public opinion in the direction of desired reforms. It exerted a decisive influence in the drive toward state care of the insane that culminated in the passage of the act of 1890, and in ensuing years it was an active factor in promoting the progress in nearly every field of social welfare in this State.

"C.O.S." and Conference The origin and rise of the charity organization movement was another development of this period. Its main ideal was to organize the social welfare agencies and resources in a community through such media as central registration, coöperation between the various agencies, and discriminate almsgiving. The germ of the charity organization idea may be traced at least as far back as the activities of the New York Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, started in 1817. But the first "C.O.S." group in America was the Buffalo Charity Organization Society, founded in 1877 by the Rev. S. H. Gurteen, an English clergyman who had been active in the founding of the London Society in 1869, the parent of all similarly named associations. The Charity Organization Society of New York City was instituted in 1882, largely through the efforts of Josephine Shaw Lowell.

Two other significant developments may be traced back to the '70's: the organization in 1873 of what is now the National Conference of Social Work, paving the way of social work as a profession, and the rise of the social case work concept, which lays emphasis on the particular needs of the individual, as opposed to indiscriminate mass treatment.

History Repeats—Again An economic depression of six years' duration, 1873-79, caused great hardship throughout the nation, and particularly in New York State.

As in previous crises, little or none of the experience of the past was utilized in meeting the needs of

those rendered destitute by the resulting unemployment. Demands were made by the jobless in all the larger communities of the State for the setting up of work-relief projects.

More than 100,000 workers were jobless in New York City alone. There, in January, 1874, a huge parade and demonstration of the unemployed was held at Tompkins Square; police charged upon the peaceful procession without provocation or warning, seriously injuring scores of workingmen.

In 1877, a special law was passed by the State Legislature enabling the almshouse commissioners of Kingston to raise \$10,000 to finance work relief consisting of breaking stone for the city streets.

A notable effort to set up a central social service agency in New York City, with a group of public and private agencies registering the needy in a central bureau, lasted for two years before indifference and antagonisms caused the bureau to close down.

From the literature of the time it would appear that the most pronounced reaction of public welfare officials in this and other states to the phenomena of the prolonged depression and mass unemployment was an almost panicky alarm over the "tramp problem" arising from the migration of thousands of jobless men.

VI. ADMINISTRATION BY THE STATE

The State Charities Act

The State Board of Charities was made a constitutional body by Article VIII of the Constitution of the State of New York adopted in 1894. Laws enacted during the following two years greatly expanded its functions and powers. Previously its duties had been exclusively inspectional and advisory.

The State Charities Act, passed in 1896, defined its powers as including the right to visit, inspect and supervise all charitable, eleemosynary, reformatory and correctional institutions and agencies, public and private, whether incorporated or not, except those under the supervision of the State Lunacy Commission or the State Prison Commission.

The Board was authorized to conduct thorough investigations into all such institutions or agencies, and to collect statistical information regarding their management and financial condition, as well as general statistics on public poor relief. It was also empowered to approve or disapprove the organization or incorporation of institutions or agencies, establish rules for the reception and retention of inmates of institutions subject to its supervision, administer the laws governing the maintenance and removal of state and alien poor and the support of dependent Indians, investigate the condition of the poor seeking public aid, and recommend measures for their relief.

An act in relation to the poor, commonly called the "Poor Law" passed the same year (1896), directed the county superintendents and other poor law officials to make annual reports to the State Board of Charities, and defined and extended the scope of the Board's powers of inquiry. Among other powers given the Board was that of ordering the correction of any improper treatment of inmates in any public almshouse.

In 1899, the Board was empowered to license dispensaries and to make rules and regulations for their operation.

Powers It was generally understood from the phrasing
Questioned of the constitutional amendment of 1894 and
the consequent State Charities Law that the
Board had the right to visit and inspect all private welfare
agencies, whether or not in receipt of public funds. But, in
1898, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
in New York City challenged this right on the ground that
the Society was not a charitable institution and hence not
under the Board's supervision.

The case went to the courts, with the Board winning two
favorable decisions; both were overturned, however, by a 4-to-3
decision of the State Court of Appeals. The Court not only
ruled that the Society was not a charitable organization, but
that the Board's supervision could extend only to institutions
and agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds,
the latter term being defined as moneys paid by the State or
any of its political divisions. Through this decision, a large
sector of the social welfare field was removed from the
supervisory authority of the Board. It was not until 1931 that
this power of inspection and visitation was partially restored,
and in 1938 it was written into the State Constitution.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made by a hostile state
administration in the early years of the present century to
destroy or emasculate the Board. One unsatisfactory result
of this conflict was the transfer in 1902 of control over the
expenditures in state institutions, hitherto vested in the state
comptroller, to a special officer known as the fiscal supervisor
of state charities, appointed by the Governor. This office
was abolished in 1922.

The Board was again vigorously attacked in the years
1915-16 during a conflict over authority between it and other
state bodies and the public charities administration in New
York City; but again it survived the storm.

The New Meanwhile great changes were taking place in the
Pattern social welfare pattern of New York State. The
nation as a whole was rapidly rising to a position
of world ascendancy; a bewildering succession of inventions
and the intensive exploitation of our natural resources were
piling up undreamed-of wealth for the few, and the common

people were clamoring for a more equitable distribution of that wealth. It was an age aptly characterized by the historian, Harold U. Faulkner, as "the quest for social justice."

The turn of the century saw the rise of social reform movements of all kinds. Generally speaking, the nature and aims of these movements reflected a momentous transformation in the philosophy of social work. Until then, moral factors, such as character defects in the individual, had been widely regarded as the primary causes of poverty and dependency; now emphasis was being laid on environmental causes.

It was a period of intensive agitation for factory laws, better wage and living standards, workmen's compensation, child labor legislation, slum clearance and improved housing, and concentrated attention to the care, treatment and possible prevention of mental and physical handicaps. Philanthropic societies were formed, dedicated to preventive work for special groups; clinics were established for the mentally ill, the tuberculous, the crippled and other groups.

Signalizing the growing recognition of the need for research and the value of treating disease in its early stages, was the development of what is now the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Hospital, located in New York City.

Public interest in the problem of tuberculosis was given concrete expression in the establishment, in 1900, of a new type of state institution, the New York State Hospital for the Treatment of Incipient Pulmonary Tuberculosis at Raybrook. The same year saw the founding of the State Hospital for the Care of Crippled and Deformed Children (now the State Reconstruction Home) at West Haverstraw. A law enacted in 1909 authorized the establishment of county hospitals for the tuberculous, and many such hospitals were erected in subsequent years.

Several additional state institutions for the mentally ill and the mentally defective were built. Notable among the latter was Letchworth Village at Thiells, established in 1907 and named after the former president of the State Board of Charities. It was a model institution of its kind, constructed on the "village" plan.

The Commission in Lunacy in 1912 became the State Hospital Commission, which in turn was reorganized in 1927

as the present State Department of Mental Hygiene. Admission and discharge procedures in state hospitals were liberalized.

Parole and After-Care We may mention, among other developments of this period, the rise of voluntary and emergency admissions without court commitment, of a progressive parole system, of social service departments in institutions, of after-care of discharged and paroled patients, and of mental hygiene clinics radiating from the state hospitals. Special classes for mentally backward pupils were introduced in the public schools. A State Commission for the Care of the Feeble-Minded was established in 1918, being absorbed by the Department of Mental Hygiene in 1927.

The state public health system was reorganized in 1913, when the present Public Health Council was created. A Commission for the Blind was also formed in 1913, and in 1922 the Legislature authorized county supervisors to grant aid to the needy blind upon recommendation of the Commission.

Although new institutions for the dependent and handicapped classes were being established, the trend now was definitely away from the ideal of institutionalization and toward care and treatment in the home. Especially was this true in the field of child welfare.

Emphasis on The Child The shifting emphasis toward prevention and early treatment of social, mental and physical ills, which characterized this period, naturally tended to focus attention on the dependent child on the theory that he is the father of the dependent adult. Investigation into existing methods of care and treatment of needy children indicated serious flaws in contemporary institutional practices. All this served to stimulate a reaction against the institution as constituting an abnormal environment for the child, and a corresponding movement to maintain him in an environment as nearly normal as possible.

The children's law of 1875, prohibiting the retention of children in poorhouses, had brought about no healthy alternative to institutionalization, such as placements in foster homes.

On the contrary, as Homer Folks has pointed out in his history of child care in America, it resulted in a sharp increase in large, privately-managed orphanages and other child-caring institutions, the inmates of which were mainly supported through local public subsidies. In many cases it was found that such institutions were retaining their charges much longer than was necessary because of the flow of generous public grants.

A wholesome check to this situation was afforded by a section of the Constitution of 1894, which provided that no payments should be made by any county, city or town for any inmate of a private institution not operated according to the rules and regulations of the State Board of Charities.

But while the condition of children in institutions caused grave concern, the situation with regard to unsupervised placing-out was also very unsatisfactory, giving rise to recurring scandals. Many children were being placed out in undesirable homes; often no check-up on their treatment was made; helpless children were shunted between unscrupulous persons and negligent agencies in the absence of public supervision.

The situation was greatly improved by a legislative act of 1898, empowering the State Board of Charities to grant, withhold or revoke licenses of all persons and agencies desiring to place out dependent children; no person or agency could engage in such activity without a license. The Board was also authorized to visit any placed-out child under sixteen years of age in order to examine his environment and treatment.

Children's Courts The founding of the New York House of Refuge in 1824 had established the principle that child offenders should be maintained in institutions apart from those for adults. A logical step in the same direction was taken about three-quarters of a century later with the rise of the juvenile court movement, based on the principle that the child delinquent should not be tried in the same court as the adult.

The movement spread quickly through New York State. Children's courts were established in New York City, Buffalo,

Albany and Rochester in the first years of the century. In 1903 the Legislature enacted a law providing that cases of children under sixteen should be heard in separate "children's courts" wherever practicable. An important law of 1922 established a statewide system of children's courts vested with sweeping powers in dealing with delinquent and neglected children.

The Child Welfare Law The most important step in the counter-movement against institutionalization was the passage of the Child Welfare Law of 1915, which provided for the setting up of a board of child welfare in each up-state county and in New York City for the purpose of administering mothers' allowances to widows with one or more children under the age of sixteen years, "in order that such children may be suitably cared for in their homes by such mothers."

These boards were placed under the general supervision of the State Board of Charities. Though the creation of local boards of child welfare was made mandatory, the law unfortunately remained inoperative for many years in a number of counties which neglected to provide necessary funds to their "paper" boards. Later legislative measures extended allowances to groups of mothers other than widows.

Depressions— and Familiar Developments The general economic advance during this period was interrupted by four depressions of varying degrees of intensity. That of 1893–95 was the most serious. In New York City alone it was estimated that 40 per cent of the workers were jobless during the winter of 1893–94. Emergency relief measures were featured by the emphasis placed on work relief and self-help projects. A number of voluntary associations were organized to meet the crisis, notably the East Side Relief-Work Committee in New York City, directed by Josephine Shaw Lowell. This organization raised more than \$120,000 within a five-month period (1893–94), and employed 5,000 heads of families with these funds.

Cultivation of subsistence gardens by the unemployed—known as the "Pingree Potato Patch Plan" after Mayor

Pingree of Detroit who proposed the idea in 1894—was adopted as a major emergency measure in a number of communities, including Brooklyn, Buffalo, New York City and Syracuse.

Another impressive characteristic of this depression was the large amount of unemployment benefits afforded by labor unions, which had now reached a position of considerable strength; these benefit payments kept many jobless union members off the public relief rolls. The work-test as a prerequisite for unemployment relief was also widely applied in this period.

Work relief projects were operated under the auspices of public and private welfare agencies, and consisted largely of stone-crushing, highway building, sanitary improvement, street-cleaning, wood-cutting and snow removal. A public works program revolving around park improvement and street-cleaning was instituted in Rochester through a special appropriation of the city council. A special legislative measure authorized the Park Commissioners of New York City to expend \$1,000,000 on public works to relieve unemployment. A Citizens' Relief Fund in Buffalo raised \$65,000 in the winter of 1893-94, using the money to provide work for jobless men and women at a fixed wage of 70 cents per day.

Much concern was expressed by welfare workers over the problem of the transient and migratory unemployed, known to contemporaries as the "tramp problem." The march of the famous "Coxey's Army" and other "industrial armies" recruited from the ranks of the unemployed in various parts of the country in 1894—with the idea of petitioning Congress for adequate relief—did much to stimulate an alarmist attitude toward this problem.

From 1907 to Harding The financial panic of 1907 caused widespread unemployment and distress. Relief during this emergency was characterized by the usual round of breadlines and soup-kitchens, demonstrations of the unemployed, the optimistic establishment of employment bureaus under private auspices, the mushroom growth of citizens' emergency relief committees, and a sharp increase in the number of destitute migrants.

An interesting outgrowth of the economic crisis of 1914-15 and the post-war depression of 1920-22 was the launching of ambitious research projects into the cause and mitigation of mass unemployment, with attempts to find long-range plans to meet future depressions. As a result of these inquiries, recommendations were formulated for permanent community planning for relief, together with proposals for stabilizing employment.

In 1921, Warren G. Harding called a President's Conference on Unemployment, but the recommendations of social workers and labor leaders received scant consideration. The findings of the Conference, when published, proved disappointing to those who had hoped that a sound, permanent national policy toward emergency relief needs would develop out of the talks.

Some Effects of World War The World War had a disrupting effect on social welfare. Institutional personnel was seriously drained by enlistments and drafts. Attention of workers and agencies in the field was concentrated on war work, to the detriment of needy civilians. Public funds that normally would have been appropriated for the building and improvement of welfare institutions and services were diverted to war purposes.

Sharply reduced expenditures in the face of mounting needs created a serious situation of institutional overcrowding and understaffing, and greatly curtailed services to "outdoor" dependents. Additional problems were created by the carnage of war in terms of disabled soldiers, and the widows and orphans of those who died. But in spite of all this, certain aspects of the war period exerted favorable influences in the social welfare field.

The lessons of the war gave a tremendous impetus to child welfare, an impetus arising partly from humanitarian impulses awakened by the tragic consequences of the conflict, and partly from a desire to conserve and build up the potential man power of the nation as part of a general preparedness program. The post-war years witnessed considerable expansion in such fields as child hygiene, infant welfare, school health programs, child protection, recreation facilities, child guidance

clinics, child labor legislation, and organization and enlargement of public child welfare bureaus, with increased public supervision of child-caring agencies and institutions.

Physical examinations and mental tests of soldiers during the World War revealed a startling number of venereally diseased and mentally handicapped men among them. The resulting alarm greatly stimulated both the social hygiene and the mental hygiene movements.

Psychiatry Enters A widespread interest in Freudian psychoanalysis and in general psychiatry developed.

Such erstwhile esoteric terms as "libido", "id", and "inferiority complex" passed into the common currency of everyday conversation. Psychiatric concepts quickly permeated many areas of human thought and action, and became a dominant influence in social work theory and practice.

While the contribution of psychiatry to social work was, on the whole, a valuable one—opening up new roads to the understanding of the individual behavior—a tendency to exaggerate its place in the treatment of social ills brought about a period of unwholesome reaction. There was a violent swing from the pre-war emphasis on social and economic environmental factors in the causation of poverty and dependency to the old concept of personal failure—with this difference: the blame was now placed on defects in the mental makeup instead of in the moral fiber as formerly.

Mental hygiene was being "oversold," in spite of the protests of some leaders who counseled moderation. Certain enthusiasts even suggested that "mental hygiene" be made synonymous with "social work." It took a major depression to bring social work face to face once more with vital socioeconomic factors in the problems it had to solve.

An outstanding feature of this entire period, however, was the gradual infiltration of scientific concepts into the welfare field, replacing the old sentimental, moralistic approaches.

The State Department of Charities With the steady development of social services, old forms of administration had to be constantly altered to meet new needs. One of the major obstacles to progress had been the lack of a definite state policy in this field, which had developed in

patchwork fashion with consequent overlapping, waste and confusion.

A series of inquiries, recommendations and reorganizations culminated in the creation of a State Department of Charities as part of a general revamping of the state administrative apparatus, in accordance with the constitutional amendments of 1925. Legislative enactments of the following year made the State Board of Charities the head of the State Department of Charities effective January 1, 1927, with a chief executive officer to be known as the Director of State Charities.

Supervision of certain state institutions for the mentally defective, epileptics, and adult delinquents was transferred to the newly created Department of Mental Hygiene and to the Department of Correction.

An important measure transferred administrative control from local boards of managers to the State Department of Charities in the operation of six state institutions: the State Agricultural and Industrial School at Industry, the State Training School for Girls at Hudson, the State Reconstruction Home at West Haverstraw, the New York State Woman's Relief Corps Home at Oxford, the State Hospital for the Treatment of Incipient Pulmonary Tuberculosis at Raybrook, and the Thomas Indian School at Iroquois.*

The formerly independent State Commission of the Blind became a bureau in the new department, which also absorbed the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The relations between local and state public welfare bodies were not affected by the 1925 Constitution or the resulting legislation of 1926.

*Control of the State Reconstruction Home and the State Hospital for the Treatment of Incipient Pulmonary Tuberculosis was transferred to the State Department of Health in 1931.

VII. THE GREAT UPHEAVAL

Birth of A New Era The passage of the Public Welfare Law in 1929, superseding the antiquated Poor Law and repealing some 140 special laws dealing with local relief, inaugurated a new era in the welfare history of the State.

Until this time poor law practice was largely governed by the philosophy of 1824, emphasizing institutional care and regarding the almshouse as the center of the public relief system. Thenceforth the almshouse was to be considered only as a last resort.

The concept of home relief as the fundamental basis of welfare methods was written into the law: "*As far as possible, families shall be kept together, and they shall not be separated for reasons of poverty alone. Whenever practicable, relief and service shall be given a poor person in his home.*"

Prevention of destitution was also expressly acknowledged on the statute books as a public welfare function for the first time. Public welfare officials were directed to "give such service to those liable to become destitute as may prevent the necessity of their becoming public charges." Adequate medical care for the needy sick was made mandatory.

Implicit in the all-embracing character of the statute was the recognition of state responsibility, direct and indirect, in many branches of public welfare that had hitherto been considered outside its province.

A long step was taken toward fixing the county as the main relief administrative unit by placing additional responsibilities on county welfare officials. Each county was designated as a public welfare district, to be presided over by a county commissioner of public welfare. Five city public welfare districts were designated, namely: New York, Kingston, Oswego, Poughkeepsie and Newburgh.

New Concepts The change in official terminology from
—*New Terms* “poor relief” to “public welfare” was a
 significant index to the deep-going trans-
formation in concepts then taking place. Disappearing from
official nomenclature were such stigma-bearing terms as
“pauper,” “lunatic,” “bastard,” and “asylum.”

It was specified in the law of 1929 that “poorhouses”
should thenceforth be known as “county homes” or “city
homes”; the old “overseer of the poor” was now a “public
welfare official.”

Several days after the passage of the Public Welfare Law,
another statute was enacted substituting “social welfare” for
“charities” in the names of the State Board and the State
Department. They became, respectively, the State Board and
the State Department of Social Welfare.

Toward Old Accenting the new approach to social wel-
Age Security fare was the creation of a State Commission
 on Old Age Security in April, 1929, upon
the recommendation of Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, for
the purpose of inquiring into the condition of the aged and
reporting on “the most practical and effective method of
providing security against old age want.”

In a thorough and markedly liberal report submitted to
the Legislature in February, 1930, the Commission rendered
the opinion that large numbers of the needy aged were not
receiving adequate care, particularly those in institutions.
Its unanimous opinion, based on inspection of the sixty-two
almshouses in the State, was that, “with a few notable excep-
tions, our present public almshouse care of the aged, as of
all inmates, is inadequate and altogether unsuited to meet the
varying needs of the poor.”

This declaration served as a pointed reminder that changes
in nomenclature from “poorhouse” to “home” had not
brought about a corresponding improvement in conditions.
As an alternative to institutional relief, the Commission
recommended that, whenever possible, the needy aged “should
be provided for outside of institutions where they may con-
tinue to live among friends and enjoy a sense of freedom,
self-respect and security,” and that the administrative and

financial responsibility for a new security set-up should be held jointly by the State and the county or city.

The recommendations of the Commission were embodied in the Old Age Security Act (Chapter 387, Laws of 1930), providing for allowances to needy persons seventy years old and over who were citizens of the United States, residents of New York State for at least ten years immediately preceding application for old age assistance, and proper subjects for non-institutional relief. General supervision of old age security allowances was entrusted to the State Department of Social Welfare. Half of the cost of such assistance, including administrative expenses, was to be reimbursed by the State to the counties and cities.

In 1936 the minimum age of recipients of old age assistance was reduced to sixty-five years.

The Greatest of Crashes The steps leading up to the enactment of the old age assistance law, as we have seen, preceded the onset of the Great Depression, and were part of a newly-formulated, progressive state welfare program. But, before this new policy could get under way, the economic crisis ushered in by the crash of October, 1929, shook the public welfare system to its very foundations. The normal relief machinery all but broke down completely under its impact.

In the absence of a long-range plan for meeting such emergencies, the earliest reactions to the situation followed closely the cycle of hastily-organized emergency relief schemes characteristic of previous depressions. But it soon became evident that this unprecedented crisis required unprecedented action.

As early as March, 1930, Governor Roosevelt attempted to tackle the problem at the source by appointing a committee to study and report on "stabilization of industry for the prevention of unemployment." But it was patent that this step could have little effect in meeting current needs.

Factory payrolls kept hurtling downwards, hundreds of thousands of workers were thrown out on the streets, and the savings of those fortunate enough to accumulate reserves during the prosperity years were quickly eaten away. Private welfare agencies doubled their expenditures, but their con-

tribution to the unemployment relief problem was as a drop in the bucket. Public relief in New York State rose 32 per cent in 1930, and 80 per cent more in 1931. Local relief machinery was jammed and helpless in the face of the mounting distress.

Beginning of T.E.R.A. State help was needed, and could no longer be deferred. Under the circumstances the Legislature, responding to a special message from Governor Roosevelt, unanimously passed the "Wicks Act" in September 1931, providing state aid to the localities for unemployment relief. Through this measure, New York became the first state to participate in the financing of emergency unemployment relief, but the basic theory of local responsibility was not thereby altered. A special state agency, the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (T.E.R.A.) was created to carry out the provisions of the law.

An appropriation of \$20,000,000 was voted to the T.E.R.A. for the "emergency period"—November 1, 1931 to June 1, 1932—to reimburse local public welfare agencies to the extent of 40 per cent for home relief expenditures.

The act also authorized each public welfare district to set up an emergency work bureau for the purpose of providing work relief to the unemployed, aided by such state grants as could be obtained from the emergency appropriation. Local unemployment relief was thus vested in two different bodies, responsible for work and home relief, respectively. Subsequent amendments authorized any city or county to merge both functions in an Emergency Relief Bureau, with the approval of the T.E.R.A.

As contemplated in the original law, the T.E.R.A. was to exist for only a few months, but with the prolongation of the "emergency," its life was extended from time to time with frequent modifications in powers and duties corresponding to changing situations. The organization continued to function for nearly six years. During this period, "normal" public welfare activities were administered and supervised by the State Department of Social Welfare; while "emergency" unemployment relief functions were in the hands of the T.E.R.A.

Not long after the establishment of the T.E.R.A. it became apparent not only in New York but throughout the nation that the combined resources of the states and the local districts were not sufficient to meet the human needs created by the greatest economic catastrophe in our history. Federal intervention was now urgently required.

Federal Help In February, 1933, New York first became the recipient of federal aid for unemployment relief through advances made by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Three months later, Congress passed an act creating the Federal Emergency Relief Administration to ensure more effective federal-state cooperation in providing aid to the distressed, and appropriated \$500,000,000 to be distributed as direct grants to the states for this purpose. All three major political units, federal, state and local, were now involved in the business of relief.

Thereafter New York State's policy was necessarily conditioned by changes in the national program. From November 21, 1933 to April 1, 1934, the Federal Government assumed full administrative and financial responsibility for work relief through the operation of the Civil Works Administration. The T.E.R.A. acted as the Government's C.W.A. agency for New York in this period, supervising the expenditure of \$88,700,000 in federal funds, for wages and materials.

The successor to C.W.A., the federal Works Progress Administration, was established in April, 1935, for the purpose of providing work for all "employable" persons on the relief rolls—an aim never completely realized.

Toward the end of 1935 the Federal Government discontinued all grants to states for home relief. Since July, 1933, it had assumed financial responsibility for relief to all needy transients—i.e., persons resident in a state for less than one year who had not received public aid during that period—but in November, 1935, it withdrew entirely from this form of relief, except for the maintenance of transient camps operated through W.P.A.

Much confusion and hardship resulted from the abrupt termination of the federal transient program. However, camps set up under the Civilian Conservation Corps program,

instituted in 1933 for young men whose families were on relief rolls, continued to operate.

A Permanent Problem By this time the concept of "emergency" was fast disappearing and people were approaching the problems of social welfare in terms of permanence. Several years of hunger and heartbreak, of family break-ups due to poverty alone, of the apple-selling panacea for unemployment, of the pathetic "spring-cleaning" campaigns, and other instances of the futility of the laissez faire attitude toward unemployment, brought the public to a realization that measures must be taken looking toward a permanent solution of the whole many-phased problem of economic distress.

Unrest among the millions made jobless through no fault of their own was widespread and deep. It was now widely recognized that, if recurring economic crises and mass unemployment are inevitable features of our economic system at its present stage of development, then society itself is responsible for cushioning their impact on the individual. Relief was not enough; a firmly grounded system of security must be established to absorb the shock to the individual and to society, and as protection against the devastating loss of substance and morale which such crises entail.

The Social Security Act It was in this atmosphere that President Roosevelt in June, 1934, created a Committee on Economic Security, whose recommendations served as the basis of the Social Security Act which became law in August, 1935. This act contained provisions for (1) the encouragement of state unemployment insurance systems; (2) a federal compulsory old-age insurance system to benefit workers aged 65 years and over; (3) federal grants matching state aid to needy persons 65 years and over; (4) federal grants to states equal to one-third the sum expended for aid to dependent children under sixteen years of age; (5) federal funds to match state aid to the needy blind; (6) outright federal grants to states for expanding local maternal and child health programs, improving state aid to crippled children, and child welfare services generally,

and stimulating plans for vocational rehabilitation of the physically disabled; and (7) a fixed annual sum to be allotted to states and localities for the improvement of public health services.

A Social Security Board, consisting of three members functioning as an independent governmental body, was set up to administer most of the provisions of the act. The social security program thus instituted by the Federal Government admittedly contained inadequacies and defects, but it marked a great step forward.

Gov. Lehman's Program New York State, along with other states, proceeded to enact legislation conformable to the federal Social Security Act in order to derive a maximum amount of benefits from it.

Even before the creation of the federal program, the New York Legislature, upon recommendation of Governor Lehman, had enacted a law (effective April 25, 1935), establishing a system of unemployment insurance based on a percentage of the payroll tax, to be administered by the State Industrial Commissioner. A special division of the State Labor Department was created to carry out the provisions of the law. Payment of benefits to the insured unemployed began on January 1, 1938.

In 1936, Governor Lehman submitted an eight-point social security program for the consideration of the Legislature, but the only section enacted into law was one bringing the provisions for old age assistance into line with federal requirements. At present about 50 per cent of the costs for this form of aid is borne by the federal government, 25 per cent by the localities, and the remainder by the State.

A more comprehensive statute, enabling New York to become eligible for federal grants for aid to dependent children (mothers' allowances) and to the blind, was enacted in 1937.

Reorganizing the Department A far-reaching reorganization of the State's public welfare administrative system took place in 1937 to meet the rapid expansion of state services and the changing relationships of

the state to federal and local welfare activities. Chapter 873 of the Laws of 1936, amending the Public Welfare Law, provided for the appointment of a new State Board of Social Welfare consisting of fifteen members, with power to name the Commissioner of Social Welfare. A permanent system of state aid for home relief was established, with the State paying 40 per cent of the costs.

On July 1, 1937, the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration transferred its duties with respect to home relief to the State Department of Social Welfare. Emergency work bureaus set up by the localities were abolished as of July 1, 1938; thereafter local relief responsibilities were again in the hands of the regular public welfare officials.

Further changes in the public welfare system of the State were effected through Chapter 358 of the laws of 1937. Embodied in this statute were three major provisions: (1) state responsibility for all Indians and for all non-settled persons, that is, those who have not resided in a public welfare district for at least a year without receiving public relief; (2) state reimbursement to the extent of 40 per cent for salaries of local public welfare personnel; and (3) establishment of public welfare staffs, state and local, on a more permanent basis by placing many hitherto temporary positions under civil service.

An interesting index to the tremendous needs arising out of the Great Depression is afforded in the final report of the T.E.R.A., dated June 30, 1937. During its five years and eight months of existence, \$1,155,000,000 was expended, including expenditures as agent for the C.W.A.

The Scope in 1938 The extent of the public welfare program now in effect in New York is indicated by the annual report of the State Board of Social Welfare for 1938. In the last month of that year, 460,081 cases comprising about 1,150,000 individuals received some form of public assistance—aid to the blind, aid to dependent children, old age assistance or home relief—at a total cost of \$15,602,835.*

*This excludes work relief, and other forms of relief not specifically mentioned. Administrative costs are also excluded.

Of that total expenditure, it was estimated that localities in December, 1938, paid \$8,069,871, or 52 per cent; the State paid \$5,941,167, or 38 per cent; and the Federal Government's share was \$1,591,797, or 10 per cent. In the same month, the Federal Government spent approximately \$17,000,000 in wages, paid to about 220,000 W.P.A. workers originally certified as in need of relief.

Recent Amendments Through constitutional amendments approved at the polls in November, 1938, the people of the State wrote into the fundamental law several important provisions regarding social welfare. In section 1, article XII, it is declared that the aid, care, and support of the needy are public concerns, and shall be provided by the State and its subdivisions in such manner as the legislature may determine. Section 2 of the same article, insures the continuing existence of the State Board of Social Welfare, and gives to the Board broader powers of visitation and inspection. In section 8 of article VII, constitutional authority is given to legislative provision for the relief of the needy, for the care and education of certain special categories of dependents, including among them the blind, deaf, deaf-mutes, the physically handicapped, juvenile dependents and delinquents, and the needy sick. This section also sanctions protection, by insurance or otherwise, against the hazards of unemployment, sickness, and old age.

VIII. LOOKING FORWARD

As the eventful fourth decade of the twentieth century nears its end, public welfare in New York State remains in a transitional stage, although the process of crystallization has already set in. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that the last ten years have witnessed more vital changes in this field than the preceding three centuries combined. So rapid has been the tempo of transformation that it is hardly possible to stand off and evaluate our progress at this time. The various programs set in motion—particularly those associated with the social security laws—will undoubtedly undergo modification as time reveals specific defects and weaknesses, overlapping, inconsistencies and conflicts between particular parts. But one thing appears certain: social security as an integral part of our democratic system is here to stay. A return to the *laissez faire* philosophy as applied to the field of social welfare is inconceivable.

Many basic problems of welfare have been solved by the historic social legislation of national and statewide scope enacted during recent years, but more await solution. New developments have created new problems, some of them quite serious.

Among the unsolved problems of public welfare looming large on the horizon, the following may be mentioned: How will unemployment insurance and other aspects of the social security laws be harmonized with the administration of relief? Shall relief continue to be administered on a categorical basis—that is, with veteran relief, aid to dependent children, aid to the blind, old age assistance, etc. being regarded as distinct entities? Or, should relief be generalized, sweeping away the categories and making the need of the individual or family the sole determinant? How can the transition of a large portion of our public welfare organization from the framework of emergency to that of permanency be accomplished with maximum efficiency? What should be the relative shares of local, state, and federal government in the cost of a

permanent program? What are the changes in revenue policies on the one hand and relief policies on the other which may be involved in the necessity of balancing expenditure against income over a long period?

Attainment of a maximum degree of integration and coördination in the complicated public welfare mechanism emerging from the social legislation of the past decade will probably involve much time and trial. Serious consideration must be directed toward the question of bringing the federal, state and local administrative set-ups into satisfactory equilibrium. The lack of stability in the unemployment relief program is still resulting in a great deal of avoidable hardship, suffering and demoralization among needy jobless and their families.

Never has the need for social engineering been so pronounced as at present. In charting the future, public welfare planners must avoid both the Scylla of false economy and the Charybdis of seductive panaceas which, in the name of social security, promise to solve all our ills with some one simple measure. The pattern of public welfare is inseparably bound up with our national economy; in the future, as in the past, its form and content will be determined primarily by the development of the economic structure.



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